



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: May 28, 2020

Agenda Item: Mount Haggin WMA German Gulch Grazing Lease Renewal, Region 3

Action Needed: Final **Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 minutes

Background: FWP proposes to renew a grazing lease on the Mount Haggin Wildlife Management Area (WMA)-German Gulch system for a 10-year term to extend June 2021 through October 2030. The grazing lease is part of a cooperative grazing program that began in 1989. It consists of 436 Animal Unit Months with the Peterson Fairmont Ranch, encompassing approximately 9,287 acres on the WMA and 10,829 acres administered by the US Forest Service (USFS), totaling 20,106 acres. This cooperative system schedules growing season, seasonal deferment, and rest treatments over the entire system, benefiting native vegetation and supporting forage and cover needs for a variety of wildlife, including big game winter range. The system has demonstrated the compatibility of livestock production and wildlife/recreation-based values. This would continue as a cash lease, involving half of the standard FWP rate as the lessee is responsible for substantial fence repairs and maintenance.

Public Involvement Process & Results: A draft environmental assessment was completed by FWP and released for public comment Jan. 31-Feb. 29, 2020. Two legal notices were run, each in the *Butte Montana Standard*, *Anaconda Leader*, and *Helena Independent Record*; copies of the EA were mailed or notification of its availability emailed to neighboring landowners and other interested parties; public notice was posted on the FWP web page; and copies of the EA were available at the FWP Region 3 Headquarters and Butte Area Resource Office. Five parties submitted comments during the 30-day comment period. Of the respondents, four parties represented him/herself; one represented Skyline Sportsmen. Four parties stated support for Alternative A. One party did not state support for either alternative. A Decision Notice to renew this grazing lease was signed by Region 3 Supervisor Mark Deleray on March 9, 2020.

Alternatives and Analysis: Two alternatives were considered. Alternative A: Renewal of the Mt. Haggin WMA-German Gulch grazing lease. Alternative B: Elimination of livestock grazing on the Mt. Haggin WMA portion of the German Gulch cooperative grazing system with the USFS. The habitat benefits and cooperative value of working with neighbors of the WMA would be lost.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the commission approve the Mt. Haggin WMA-German Gulch Grazing Lease Renewal. This project would continue to support enhanced habitat conditions on big game winter range, as well as other native habitats on the WMA and USFS lands, for the benefit of wildlife and the public, while demonstrating ongoing cooperative management with neighbors.

Proposed Motion: I move the commission approve the Mount Haggin WMA-German Gulch Grazing Lease Renewal as proposed.